Press communiqué

The Ministerial Council held its fifty-fourth session on 19 and 20 March 1995 at the headquarters of its secretariat at Riyadh, under the chairmanship of His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain and Chairman of the current session of the Ministerial Council, in the presence of the following:

His Excellency Mr. Rashid Bin Abdullah al-Nuaimi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates;

His Royal Highness Prince Saud al-Faisal, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia;

His Excellency Mr. Yusuf Bin Alawi Bin Abdullah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Oman;

His Excellency Sheikh Hamad Bin Jasim Bin Jabr Al Thani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar;

His Excellency Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait.

On the basis of the affirmation by the Supreme Council at its fifteenth session, held from 19 to 21 December 1994 in Bahrain, of renewed determination to push forward the perimeters of felicitous cooperation to wider horizons and to overcome all the obstacles it might encounter, the Ministerial Council was informed of the steps taken with regard to implementation of the decisions of the Supreme Council and stressed its wholehearted desire to implement those decisions so as to attain the intended goals.

The Ministerial Council welcomed the initiative of Qatar, as expressed by His Highness the Heir Apparent of Qatar on 15 February 1995 at the sectoral meeting of the Ministerial Council and the acceptance by His Highness the Heir Apparent of Bahrain of this initiative for finding a fraternal solution that preserves the close ties of affection and brotherhood through continuation of the mediation of Saudi Arabia and the good offices of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahd Bin Abd al-Aziz. The Ministerial Council also welcomed the proposal contained in the report of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council at its last session, held in Bahrain, for a redoubling of efforts to put an end to undecided bilateral issues between member States before the convening of the sixteenth session of the Supreme Council at Muscat.

The Ministerial Council welcomed the Memorandum of Understanding signed by Saudi Arabia and Yemen at Makkah on 27 February 1995, because of its positive impact on the fraternal relations existing between the two countries and the States of the region and on the promotion of security and stability.

The Council is pleased, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the League of Arab States, to express its aspiration that this occasion should mark a true new beginning in Arab relations and that the Arab

nation should see a strong League of Arab States, through respect for the sovereignty and independence of all member States, serious commitment to the Pact of the League of Arab States, the Charter of the United Nations and other international instruments and exploitation of the potentials of the Arab nation for progress, stability, development and prosperity.

The Ministerial Council also discussed the process of Iraq's implementation of the Security Council resolutions relating to its aggression against Kuwait, on the basis of the decisions of the Supreme Council at its fifteenth session in Bahrain, affirming that complete compliance by Iraq with all relevant Security Council resolutions would represent a fundamental element proving its peaceful intentions towards Kuwait and the neighbouring States and a starting-point for strengthening security and stability in the region.

In this context, the Council affirms the need for Iraq to complete the implementation of the United Nations resolutions relating to its aggression and the provisions of resolution 687 (1991), in particular those relating to the release of prisoners and detainees of Kuwaiti and other nationalities, the return of property and abstention from any act of aggression or provocation, in compliance with resolution 949 (1994). The Ministerial Council appreciates the positive stands taken by the members of the Security Council for the full implementation of all the resolutions of international legitimacy, whereby they are making a contribution to the establishment of firm bases for regional and international security and stability.

The Ministerial Council reaffirms its wholehearted desire for the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and expresses its sympathy with the fraternal Iraqi people in its ordeal and suffering, for which the Iraqi Government bears the full responsibility because of its rejection of Security Council resolutions 706 (1991) and 712 (1991) concerning Iraq's needs of food and medicine.

The Ministerial Council considered new developments in relations between the States of the Cooperation Council and the Islamic Republic of Iran and the issue of its occupation of the three islands of the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, which belong to the United Arab Emirates, and recalled the confirmation by the Supreme Council at its last summit of the position of the Council States, which calls for the maintenance of security and stability in the region and the establishment of normal neighbourly relations based on mutual respect, non-interference in internal affairs, renunciation of the use of threat of force and the peaceful settlement of disputes. It expressed its deep regret at the Islamic Republic of Iran's failure to respond to the repeated invitations of the United Arab Emirates to seek a solution to this issue by peaceful means. It expressed concern that the Iranian Government had proceeded to take measures designed to establish its occupation of the three islands, in contravention of the principles of international law, the Charter of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the principles of good-neighbourliness and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the States of the region.

The Council reiterates its firm position in support of the United Arab Emirates and affirms its sovereignty over its three islands, the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. It also reaffirms its absolute backing for all

the peaceful measures being taken to recover its sovereignty over its three islands and calls on Iran to refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice.

The Council studied developments in the Middle East peace process in all its aspects, affirming that a just and lasting peace must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), the principle of land for peace, full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem, and the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. The Council noted with satisfaction the breakthroughs achieved in the peace process since its inception at the Madrid Conference in 1991 and, at the same time, expresses its concern at Israel's dilatoriness in implementing the Palestinian-Israeli Agreement and its persistence in altering the demographic and legal status of Jerusalem.

The Council expresses concern that there has been no progress on the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks and, in this connection, reiterates its support for the just demands of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Lebanese Republic and its great appreciation of their positions and their earnest efforts to ensure the success of the peace process. It commends the ongoing efforts being made by the United States of America to overcome the obstacles in the way of the peace process and activate the Middle East peace process.

Being firmly convinced that a just and comprehensive peace must achieve equal and balanced security for all parties, and seeking to make the Middle East region a region free from all weapons of mass destruction, the Ministerial Council calls on Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to place all its nuclear facilities under the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

In the field of post and communications, the Council approved the adoption of the Memorandum of Understanding concerning first-class mail, certain decisions concerning telephone communication rates and representation of the Council States on the Governing Board of the INMARSAT corporation.

In the context of economic relations between the States of the Cooperation Council, States and international economic groupings, the Council reviewed the results of the meeting held in January 1995 between the Council States and the Japanese Government. It expressed its satisfaction at the results of this meeting and hopes that it will contribute to an increase in Japanese investments in the Council States.

It also reviewed the results of the sixth meeting of the Joint Cooperation Committee of the Council States and the European Union held at Brussels on 7 March 1995.

The Council notes that the amendments made by the European Union to the Generalized System of Preferences as from 1995 will be detrimental to Gulf exports to the European Market, which is not in accordance with the commitment of the European side under the cooperation agreement concluded between the two sides, and it calls on the European Union to consider measures to ensure that

the exports of the Council States continue to benefit from trade advantages in the European Market.

It looks forward to the joint ministerial meeting of the two groups, to be held in May 1995, and hopes that this meeting will help to advance economic cooperation between the two groups to encompass broader areas so as to increase the flow of trade and investment between the two groups. The Council has also been informed of the results of the dialogue that took place on 9 and 10 March 1995 between the Council States and the Government of the United States of America.

The Ministerial Council discussed the deterioration of the security situation and the accumulation of human suffering in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the light of the Serbs' continued aggression and their rejection of the peace plan. The Council condemns the Serbs for their acts of aggression, their defiance of Security Council resolutions and their obduracy regarding efforts to establish peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Council reiterates its call for the adoption of all possible measures to ensure Serbian compliance with its relevant resolutions, strengthen United Nations international protection, provide effective protection for safe areas and extend these throughout Bosnian territory, and enable the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina to exercise its inalienable and legitimate right to self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Ministerial Council calls for a halt to the bloodshed to which the Chechen people is exposed, expresses its profound regret at the continuation of the bloodshed and calls on the parties to the dispute to resolve their problems through dialogue and negotiation.

The Ministerial Council reviewed the situation in Somalia and Afghanistan and calls on the parties to the dispute to enter into a serious dialogue to resolve their differences, achieve national reconciliation and preserve the unity of their people and the territorial integrity of their countries.

The Council also discussed a number of the records of earlier meetings of the Ministerial Committees on finance, economy, agriculture, industry, petroleum and posts, telegraphs and telephones, approved them and affirmed the importance of the completion by the Ministers of Finance of the talks on a standardized customs tariff vis-à-vis the outside world, in accordance with the decision of the Supreme Council at its fifteenth session in Bahrain.

The Council also approved the decision of the Committee on Financial and Economic Cooperation that it was not necessary to endorse certificates of origin and the accompanying invoices and safety certificates for foodstuffs in respect of goods of national origin destined for embassies, missions and consulates in the Council States, with the stipulation that other relevant authorities should be bound by that.

The Ministerial Council decided to issue an invitation for the convening of a meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Ministers of Finance and Petroleum of the Council States to discuss overall economic relations between the Council States, States and economic groupings.

Done at Riyadh
on 20 March 1995